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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3768th meeting of the Security Council, held on 16 April 1997 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation between Iraq and Kuwait", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the case of an Iraqi aircraft which flew from Baghdad, Iraq to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on 9 April 1997 and then departed.

"The Government of Iraq, in a letter dated 3 February 1997, had requested clearance from the Committee established pursuant to resolution 661 (1990) for the release of 50 million dollars from the frozen Iraqi assets being held in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to cover pilgrimage costs and requested the agreement of the Committee for flights by Iraqi Airways to transport those pilgrims to Jeddah, during the holy pilgrimage season.

"The Committee answered in a letter dated 3 March 1997 that it would be in a better position to consider the release of the frozen Iraqi funds if a request was submitted by a country which was willing to release such funds to meet the pilgrimage costs.

"The Government of Iraq proceeded with this particular flight without specific consultation with the Committee. Such consultation would have allowed the Committee to consider the matter and to determine whether the flight required Committee approval under the relevant resolutions.

"The Security Council draws to the attention of Member States their obligations under resolutions 661 (1990), 670 (1990) and other relevant resolutions.

"The Council underlines its respect for the obligation of Muslims to perform the Hajj pilgrimage."

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